

THE CATHOLIC MIND

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No. 898.

NEGROES, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS YOUR MOTHER!

JOSEPH ECKERT, S.V.D.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii, 28).

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Negroes and the Catholic Church

JOSEPH ECKERT, S.V.D.

*An Address Delivered before the National Catholic
Interracial Federation, Pittsburgh, Labor Day, 1939.*

DURING the eighteen years of my work among the Negroes in Chicago, I have often heard the strange remark—which no doubt could be sufficiently verified by other priests in the mission work—namely, “I did not know that the Catholic Church is also for us Negroes.” At first such a remark startled me, but later it gave me great concern when I saw how true and justified it often was and how it hampered the work of the Church among the Negroes.

A little incident which happened about four years ago at St. Anselm's Church illustrates this quite well. A good non-Catholic colored mother, wanting her children to attend Sunday School, took them along with her to a Pentecostal church. The children went along with her for some time, but finally refused to go on the ground that the people were shouting too much, and lacked that religious decorum which they instinctively expected during the services.

The mother then took them, first to a Baptist and then to a Methodist Sunday School, but neither satisfied the children, so they stayed away. They actually went on a strike.

However, the mother, bent upon religious instruction for her children, held a little consultation with them. Finally, she said to them: "Recently I have seen colored people go to a large white Catholic church at Michigan and 61st Street. It seems that we colored people are welcome there now. Next Sunday I am going to take you all there."

When Sunday came, they all dropped in at the 9 o'clock services, which happened to be the Children's Mass. The mysterious atmosphere of the church, the soft melodious strains of the organ, the singing and praying of the children, as well as the dignified manner of the priest at the altar and in the pulpit, made such a deep impression upon them that they prayed as they never had done before.

Outside, after Mass, the mother asked the children: "How do you like this church?" All answered: "Mother, this is the church we would like to go to." The oldest boy, about ten years old, plucked up enough courage and came up to me while I was standing in front of the church.

"Mr. Priest," he said to me, "is there a Sunday School here where a boy like me can go and learn something about Religion?" "Of course," I answered. "Right now Sister is having Sunday School for a group of children over in the school. You may join them if you wish."

With joy beaming in his face he said: I'll go right now, and I'll take all my brothers and sisters along if it is all right with you, Mr. Priest."

He did, and today, not only is he a good devout Catholic, but also his father and mother, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and cousins, in all about twenty-five.

ARE NEGROES WELCOME ?

Is the Catholic Church also for us Negroes? Considering the prejudices exhibited by many Catholics, priests, Sisters, and by the lay people in many parts of the country, and the aloofness and unconcern often shown in our churches, schools, and Catholic institutions to the Negroes, we cannot be surprised, at all, that Negroes should often think that the Catholic Church is only for the white people. Some Negro ministers and, especially of late, leaders of Communism, use this as an argument to keep people away from the Catholic Church, and even to wean away lukewarm Negro Catholics.

It is well that on the occasion of a gathering of Catholic Negroes, which has for its program and objective: "To promote Catholic action and the Propagation of the Faith among the colored people of the United States," that we state most emphatically and loudly that the Catholic Church is for the Negroes as well as for any other humans living in the world. Negroes belong to the great human family; they also are the masterpieces of God's hands, fashioned a little less than the angels. God is as much interested in them as in anybody else. Therefore, Christ came to save them and died for them. Christ bade the Apostles to teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Christ stated emphatically that all men should belong to the Church. And Saint Paul wrote to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew, nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii, 28).

Christ wants all men, without exception, to follow Him. Christ is no respecter of persons. The principles of Christ are the never-changing program of the Church, for the Church is the visible and infallible

representative of Christ. The Church would cease to be THE Church, the only saving institution, if she were not concerned about the souls of all men, no matter of what race or color, and if she refused admittance to those who seek to become members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

THE CHURCH'S INTEREST IN NEGROES

The Church, mindful of the Divine commission entrusted to her by her Founder, from her very beginning has been interested in the Negroes, not only in Africa, but also in America. The pages of the history of the Church in America attest amply to this statement. The early Spanish and French missionaries felt the obligation to teach the Negro slaves what they could of Christianity, and to promote education among them, even at the risk of violating the strict though unjust laws of the country. They put to shame the Protestants who stood aloof for fear of getting into trouble with the Government, or of being accused of favoring or loving the Negro too much. Witness the tireless and miraculous successes of Saint Peter Claver. Witness also the zealous work and constant solicitude of the early Sulpician Fathers for the spiritual welfare of the colored people in Maryland. The same zeal was displayed by priests and Brothers in Louisiana, Kentucky, and other parts of the country. And this, though priests were few, and these few were sent principally to preserve the Faith of those who had come to our shores from Europe.

However, more organized efforts on the part of the Church to evangelize the Negroes in the United States were made after the Civil War. In response to the appeal of the Second Council of Baltimore, the Mill Hill Fathers took up the cause of the Negroes. An urgent appeal for priests was sent out by the late Cardinal Vaughan and priests came to Baltimore to

devote their lives to the Negroes. The missionary spirit and unlimited zeal of Cardinal Vaughan lives on today in the hearts of the Josephite Fathers, who today not only are bearing so nobly and enthusiastically the brunt of the Mission work in the South, but also may with pardonable pride point to the many Mission stations they have founded and are maintaining, as well as to the successes of their labors and sacrifices. Other Societies took up the work, foremost among them, the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Society of the Divine Word, African Missionaries, Jesuit Fathers, and recently almost all Religious Communities have sent priests to work among the Negroes in all parts of the country.

The Catholic Church is always at its best where people are well instructed in matters of Religion. Catholic life finds its best expression in those who understand well the principles of Faith, and grasp the necessity and reasonableness of moral conduct. Therefore, Mission work will be most efficient, wherever there is a good school. Schools, however, necessitate Religious Communities of Sisters. Over one hundred years ago, we find a group of noble Negro women, under the guidance and inspiration of the saintly Father Joubert, organizing in Baltimore, as the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Another group of Negro women founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans. Fifty years ago, Miss Katharine Drexel of Philadelphia gave up a life of ease and wealth to found the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Young women followed her noble example and joined her to devote their lives to the Christian Education of Indians and Negroes. The many schools which the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament successfully conduct and Xavier College in New Orleans, attest amply to their efficient labors and sacrifices. Of late, other Religious Communities of women have volunteered their services for the Mission work among the colored.

A NATIVE CLERGY

However, until recently a very important part of the personnel for Mission work among the Negroes was missing. It must be put down as an axiom in the Mission work of the Church, that no people can be brought into, and kept in, the fold of Christ, unless they are being ministered unto by their own priests. The late Pope Pius XI, Pope of the Missions, in a rescript to Very Rev. William Gier, S.V.D., then Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word, on the occasion of the founding of St. Augustine's Seminary, Bay St. Louis, Miss., laid great stress upon the absolute necessity of colored priests, if the American Negro is ever to be converted to the Catholic Church. Later the same Pope Pius XI, in one of his special encyclicals on the *Native Clergy*, enunciated the necessity of native priests everywhere, and most strongly urged the Bishops of the world, especially in Mission fields, to begin at once to train young natives for the priesthood.

Therefore, during the last few years, the Church has been most solicitous to educate, at tremendous financial sacrifices, a native clergy, not only in China, Japan, Africa, India, but also in the United States. St. Augustine's Seminary, conducted by the Society of the Divine Word, at Bay St. Louis, Miss., is today the loud answer to the urgent appeals of two popes, Benedict XV, and the late Pope Pius XI. Ten Negro priests who have received Holy Orders at Bay St. Louis, are today working side by side with other priests, either expanding the Kingdom of God, or reclaiming the lost sheep among the colored people here in the United States, as well as on the West Coast of Africa. How wise and far sighted the Holy Father was, the future will tell.

Taking a bird's-eye view of the Negro Mission Field in the United States, we find success everywhere. A

great percentage of the converts made in the United States in recent years was recruited from among the Negroes. Just now a research is being carried on by some members of the University of Chicago into the conditions of the Negroes of Chicago. So far some interesting facts, as they relate to the religious conditions of the Chicago Negroes, were revealed, of which the foremost were:

1. A great religious revival, as exemplified by the many new sects and churches, especially of a Spiritualistic or Pentecostal type, which ape the Catholic ritual.
2. A strong leaning towards Communism.
3. A special interest in Catholicism.

The latter interested the research workers so much that they asked me for some reasons for these apparent "mass conversions towards Catholicism," as they termed it.

NEGRO CONVERTS

This phenomenon observed in Chicago is, no doubt, being noted in other large Negro communities in the South or North. To me it appears that a special grace is being showered by Almighty God upon the Negroes in the United States. Other nationalities have repudiated God's grace, while on the other hand, the Negroes are accepting it and cooperating with it. That is true of the Negroes in Africa, for from all Missions we hear of mass conversions almost unheard of before in any part of the world, so much so that our Holy Father has seen fit to appoint two native Negro priests as bishops in Africa.

But in a certain measure this is also true of the American Negro. I myself have seen a great change for the better and an improvement of religious conditions. The innate and deep-rooted prejudice on the part of priests, Sisters, and people, which undoubtedly formed a great obstacle to the progress of the Catholic Church among the Negroes here, is now being gradu-

ally though slowly eliminated. On all sides, interest in the Negro is growing. He is being studied and observed. New contacts between the white and Negro groups, almost impossible twenty years ago, are now being established in schools, academies, colleges and universities.

Prejudice which Negroes harbored in their hearts is also breaking down; the bitter attitude of non-Catholic leaders among Negroes is changing in favor of the Church. They are aware that salvation for the Negroes lies in the direction of the Catholic Church more than anywhere else. More than once I have heard that idea expressed by prominent Negro leaders. They themselves, indeed, have not the courage and grace to submit to the Church, but they realize the advantages and blessings which come from the Catholic Church.

In the Catholic Church both races begin to meet each other on equal grounds. They discuss their problems and try to bring about a solution of them according to the principles of Christian Charity and Social Justice. They find out that they are formed of the same dust and endowed with the same immortal soul, which must be saved, and is being saved by the ministrations of the Church.

Therefore though we know that we have difficulties to face, pessimism has no ground to stand upon as far as the Catholic Negro Mission Work is concerned.

The Catholic Church is forging steadily ahead among the Negroes. I personally think that the number of Negro Catholics is far larger than the figure given in the Directory. Progress is being reported everywhere. The Bishops, fully conscious of their duties to teach all, open new mission fields every year. The mission personnel is being increased with young priests and Sisters filled with zeal and enthusiasm that is often astounding. Therefore in ten years, according to statistics given by the Very Rev. Father Tennelly,

S.S., in the annual report of the Negro and Indian Missions, the mission work has actually doubled in the number of churches, schools, priests, Sisters and converts. Where there were about 2,000 converts reported ten years ago, there are today almost 5,000. I myself have seen the number of Negro Catholics in Chicago grow during the last eighteen years from a little handful of 1,200 at St. Monica's Church to almost 15,000. And here I wish to emphasize the fact that by far the larger majority of these are converts.

However, the mission work among the Negroes is still in its beginning. Much work is to be done as yet. Therefore we Catholics, priests and people, must help the Church to fulfil her mission as rapidly as possible. This is to be done by real Catholic Action, not by destructive criticism of Bishops and priests, who, after all, cannot change deep-rooted conditions and eliminate prejudices overnight. But we must aid them and cooperate with them as much as possible. And how?

CATHOLIC ACTION

First of all by our good example. A few months ago an editorial appeared in the Negro weekly *The Call*, published in Kansas City, Mo. It has been reprinted in many magazines and newspapers. It was entitled "Teach Them How To Live." It emphasized the necessity and influence of good example. Yes, we are to teach them, not so much by word, by useless theorizing, but by example. Good example will do the same today as it did in the early Christian centuries. It will inspire, it will draw non-Catholics to the Catholic Church. We priests know only too well how many of our faithful zealous converts were brought into the Church by our Negro Catholics.

Secondly, we should be Apostles through word. Why not encourage non-Catholics to come to church with you, or attend instruction classes? Why not accompany them? Why not distribute Catholic litera-

ture among them? Why not help to instruct people through the Confraternity of Religious Instructions?

Thirdly, another very important means in my mind to help to perform Catholic Action, to bring Negroes into the Catholic Church, is by giving to the Church more Negro priests and Negro Sisters. They are needed more today than ever before; but let us not forget the truth that priests and Sisters grow up in good Catholic homes, where the fear and love of God reign supreme, and the religious vocation to the priesthood as well as Sisterhood is nurtured and cultivated from early childhood, by a life of prayer and sacrifice of a good Catholic father and mother. We know that many a boy or girl started out to become a priest or a Sister, but failed miserably in the attempt, because they had never been taught and never learned the spirit of self-sacrifice and self-denial. Therefore pray to the Lord to send many laborers into the field which is ripe for the harvest.

Yes, God wills it, that the Catholic Church march on among the Negroes until the day when all will be united in one Fold of Christ, and the true Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man will be proclaimed and recognized by all.

Converts by Mail

LESTER J. FALLON, C.M., S.T.D.

Reprinted from The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, April, 1940.

A HOUSEWIFE in a small Kentucky town was reading her local newspaper. She noticed an interesting column of information on the Catholic religion and was seized with the desire to learn more about the faith of Catholics. She had no Catholic friends or neighbors. She knew no Catholic priest. How could she go about it?

Two nuns were returning by train to their convent in Jefferson City, Mo., from the Catechetical Congress in St. Louis in 1937. They became engaged in conversation with a non-Catholic lady who operated a beauty shop in a small Missouri town in which there was no Catholic church. She expressed the desire to learn more about their Church. How could she go about it?

In the course of making his visits to his patients, the chaplain of a large Catholic hospital chanced to meet the daughter of a non-Catholic who had been impressed by the kind treatment she had received. The daughter signified her desire to study the Catholic religion, but she would soon return to a university where she would not have the opportunity. What could she do about it?

In Louisville, Ky., the pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows Church was conducting the Novena of Our Mother of Sorrows over the radio. He received much mail in response to the broadcast, including widely scattered requests for instruction on the beliefs and practices of Catholics. What was he to do about it?

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

In each of these instances they *could* do something about it. There was an answer to their question, perhaps the only convenient answer. That answer was an application for a Correspondence Course in Christian Doctrine. These instances are mentioned because it is the purpose of this article to focus attention on the fact that a religious correspondence course in Christian Doctrine, besides having a part to play in practical catechetics, often answers a very definite need and often serves as a necessary implement in the apostolate to non-Catholics, whether the apostle be priest or layman.

And if this be true, the reminder may be in order that the work of presenting the Faith to non-Catholics faces two problems which are simply stated but not always so simply solved. The *first problem* is how to sow the seed of the Word—how to create a desire for knowledge of the teachings of our Faith, how to contact non-Catholics religiously. And the *second problem* is how to nourish the sprouting seed—how to satisfy the desire for knowledge, how to sustain on a religious plane the contact, once it is made.

The zealous apostle may take advantage of a chance meeting with a stranger, or perhaps an opportune moment to talk religion with a friend or neighbor; he may mail or distribute Catholic literature or sponsor Narberth messages in a local newspaper; he may speak on the radio or preach in the street; in fact, he may use any other method of approaching non-Catholics on the subject of religion and thus provoke a desire for knowledge of the Catholic Faith; but in so doing he is solving only the first problem.

The second problem is often difficult to solve, and it is with it that this article is principally concerned. When instruction can be given by a priest going to a person or when the person can come to the priest, there

is no difficulty. But the solution is not always so simple, and difficulties so often arise that, readily admitting the greater advantages which personal instruction affords, I think that we should remember and take advantage of the fact that Uncle Sam's mailmen cover this country of ours more universally and more regularly than do the priests of the Church. Since I have been interested in giving religious instruction by mail, I am continually surprised by the many and varied difficulties that can confront non-Catholics who desire instruction—difficulties which cannot be minimized as they are often heart-breaking barriers to the path of the True Faith. And it is when these difficulties arise that a correspondence course in religion has its place, and we can put the mailmen to work as messengers of the Gospel.

DIFFICULTIES TO RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

What are some of these difficulties? The Kenrick Correspondence Courses came into existence as a follow-up for the work of preaching to non-Catholics in the street. It was born of the need to give religious instruction to many non-Catholics in out-of-the-way places who could be reached in no other way. But since these instructions have been in operation, we have encountered many other situations in which a correspondence course plays an equally important role.

A very obvious difficulty to religious instruction is that of *distance*. Interested persons in rural districts may live many miles from a Catholic priest, and their instruction presents grave difficulties both for them and the nearest priest. A gentleman in Wyoming, on a sheep ranch, lived eighty miles from the nearest priest and during the winter months transportation either way was an impossibility. But he was able to carry on his instructions by mail and, with a few supplementary instructions by the priest

in fair weather, he was eventually received into the Church. A Catholic woman in Utah, interested her Mormon husband in her Faith, but the place where they lived was visited by a priest at infrequent intervals. However, by correspondence she kept her husband instructed at a pace that equaled that of the visiting Mormon missionary.

Men and women in Federal and State penitentiaries, jails and reformatories are often interested in the Catholic religion. Such was the case with a twenty-nine-year-old gentleman, formerly a member of the Ku Klux Klan, who wished to learn about the Church in an Indiana penitentiary. As is usually the case, the prison authorities made the correspondence course available, and on its completion the nearest Catholic priest was informed and he was received into the Church. Soldiers in the army are often interested in the Church, but sometimes it is impossible for a chaplain to instruct them. Such was the case of sixty army men in Honolulu, who received their instructions by mail, and have since returned to the United States and have spread the correspondence course to other army centers throughout the country.

Invalids in hospitals and sanitariums have their difficulties when they wish to learn about the Catholic religion. An instance of this is to be found in the case of a young lady in a Texas sanitarium for those afflicted with tuberculosis. She wrote to us: "I have always wanted to be a Catholic, but my parents were angry when I mentioned it. They think the very worst of your religion, but now that I am sick they do not mind much. So if I could take my instructions from you, I am sure that the chaplain who visits here once a month will be able to receive me into the Church." Young men in CCC camps often have excellent opportunities for study, but are far removed from a priest except at irregular intervals. Such was the case of an eighteen-year-old young man who

wrote to us from Co. 1739, Willow Springs, Mo.: "Heretofore I belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, but I paid little attention to it or any church. Since becoming really interested in religion, the Catholic Church has impressed me most. Here at the Camp I have no chance of being instructed or reading anything on the Catholic religion. If you will teach me, I expect to become a Catholic after further enlightenment." He is under instruction now, and is not only a promising student but has also interested others in the same camp to apply for instruction.

DIFFICULTY OF FEAR

Then there is the difficulty of *fear* which bedevils many non-Catholics. No matter how unfounded these fears may be, no matter how unreasonable they may appear to a Catholic, they are nonetheless very real obstacles to instruction for more non-Catholics than we may suspect. Oftentimes, it is *fear of the priest*—any priest or perhaps a particular priest on the part of those who from earliest childhood have been taught to fear priests. Or it may be a *fear on the part of the uneducated* that the priest will think them too stupid if they have to face him. In fact, these fears may spring from many and unexpected circumstances. I am reminded of a young lady in Toledo, Ohio, to whom instructions by mail were a Godsend. Several years previously owing to a strange set of events, but in all sincerity, she had been baptized and confirmed while traveling in the West, not realizing that previous instruction was necessary. She discovered this when she returned home, and although she lived across the street from a parish rectory, saw priests going in and out every day, she could not summon up the courage to go and tell one what had happened. She took the course of instruction, and we wrote to the priest across the street and explained her predicament.

Very often the *fear of hostile parents, relatives or*

employers makes instruction in a normal manner an impossibility. When we first started giving instructions by mail, we used the title "Catholic Correspondence Courses," but it wasn't long before we learned that for many of our non-Catholic students the word "Catholic" in the address was a source of embarrassment. In rural district the news emanated from the post office or the postman that so-and-so was writing to Catholics. In the cities, parents (husbands or wives) and even landladies would sometimes refuse mail intended for another person. So we soon changed our title from "Catholic" to "Kenrick" Correspondence Courses. And even today our outgoing mail must often bear no return address, or must be mailed to someone's girl or boy friend. Some of our students get the mail through General Delivery, and one correspondent drives from one town to another to send and receive his instructions by mail. Last month we received a letter which ran like this: "Gentlemen: You will never know what your instruction have meant to me. Last Saturday I was able to go to the local church, and the priest who had received your letter of recommendation examined me on the Catechism and then baptized me. But because of the bitterest opposition I must keep my faith as secret as possible. I am in a most awkward position. I am a teacher in the Public School in this bigoted community, and I need the job badly. There never has been a Catholic in mine or my husband's family. I just could not, because of the isolation and the bitterest opposition, take the regular course of instruction and so your help was just what I needed. I will make my first Holy Communion next week, so please accept my thanks and remember me in your prayers as I must go to church as secretly as possible, for I run the risk of not only losing my job but also my husband, who is bitterly opposed to my faith."

CANNOT FIND TIME

Our first convert was a taxi-cab driver, and he was a typical example of how some non-Catholics with the best intentions imaginable *cannot find time* for a regular course of instruction. Although he had plenty of time to study while waiting for customers, he could not without the greatest inconvenience get to a priest. Many interested non-Catholics find that the exigencies of their work preclude the possibility of regular or even irregular hours for instruction in the priest's house. Here are two rather exceptional examples of how this works out.

Last July I received this letter from a priest in Bennington, Vt.: "Dear Father: This request for assistance is motivated by the desire to help a prospective convert. I have heard about your correspondence course of catechetical instruction and I think that it is what is needed in this case. The other day a young lady stopped at the rectory and said that she wanted to become a Catholic. As far as I can discover from two interviews with a perfect stranger, she seems quite intelligent and sincere. But she is the publicity agent for a traveling magician, visiting in advance the various towns in which he appears. She never stays longer than one week in any town. The difficulty of getting instructions is apparent. Of course, she might stop at the rectory of each town that she visits and eventually cover the matter. But I think that a correspondence course would be much more convenient, with occasional explanations from priests as she needs them. I am sending her name and her next address." We are still trying to keep a little ahead of that lady.

Somewhat similar is the plight of a Follies girl. Last December we received a letter from a priest, which read in part as follows: "Last evening a young lady called at the rectory and asked what she must do to become a Catholic. She is a member of 'Karston's

Follies Unusual.' This troupe finished its stand in Evansville last Saturday and is headed South. I recommended that she enroll in your Correspondence Course. This appealed to her, and I promised to send you her name. In the show business her address changes from week to week. But she will keep you informed as to where she will be, so that you can reach her by mail in the next few weeks at Birmingham, Ala., Columbus and Atlanta, Ga." We did succeed in reaching and instructing her by mail, and I hope that she was as good in the Follies as she was in the Catechism.

METHOD AND MATERIALS EMPLOYED

But even religious instruction by mail has its difficulties. And especially in the case of non-Catholics the surmounting of these difficulties has been responsible for the method and the materials that we employ. We have found that three major requirements must be met. First, the person taking the instruction must not have too much writing to do. Most people do not do much writing and have a natural aversion for it. Many have not the education or the ability or the time to do much studying, much less writing. Second, the course of instruction must not be divided into too many lessons and thus a long-drawn-out affair. It is difficult enough to sustain interest with a course of eight lessons, but practically impossible of it were (say) twenty-eight. Third, the course of instruction must be adapted to persons of high and low levels of education; that is, it must not be too simple for the well-educated non-Catholic, nor too difficult for the one not so well educated.

In order to meet these requirements we chose as textbooks such works as Bishop Noll's *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, Father O'Brien's *The Faith of Millions*, and *The Treasures of the Mass* published by the Benedictines of Clyde, Mo. Such books have proved really instructive to non-Catholics ranging

from a research professor of mathematics in an eastern university to a colored servant-maid in Chicago. These books are covered by no more than eight objective tests, largely consisting of questions of the true or false variety which make up eight lessons that are easy to write and easy to correct. Most of the writing is done by the instructor, and is by way of explanation of mistakes made and ampler instruction on points of doctrine when such is requested or necessitated by an analysis of the student's corrected test.

When a non-Catholic applies for the instruction, this is what happens. We send him the book, *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, which covers the Creed, the Commandments, and the Sacraments in an interesting conversational style. With the book goes a test covering the first eight sections of the instruction and a stamped addressed envelope for the return of the test. His only expense is the postage on his application. When he returns the test, one of the ninety seminarians engaged in the work becomes his instructor—corrects the test and analyzes the mistakes. Then in a letter he explains the errors that call for further explanation, answers questions that may have been asked (the asking of questions is encouraged), and this letter accompanies the corrected test which, together, with the second test, is returned to the student. And so it goes until the eighth test is returned to the student with a certificate which he may take to a priest, if he so chooses. Whenever possible, we notify the nearest priest that Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So has creditably completed the course and that it might be well to pay him or her a visit.

CATHOLICS BENEFIT ALSO

Thus far I have been speaking only of non-Catholics for whom a correspondence course has proved to be a necessary or convenient means of instruction, when otherwise it would have been out of the ques-

tion. I have not mentioned Catholics, and at least half of the 2,200 persons who have enrolled for instruction with us at Kendrick Seminary, St. Louis, or St. Mary's Seminary, Perryville, Mo., have been Catholics. Among these Catholics are included: mothers who cannot send their children to a Catholic school and want to be able to instruct them well; nurses whose patients ask them about the Catholic religion; converts who want more instruction than they were able to get before their Baptism; Catholic partners of mixed marriages who think that taking the course may interest the non-Catholic partners in the Catholic religion; adults who are the unfortunate sons or daughters of a mixed marriage and who are deprived of religious instruction; study clubs and study club leaders who use the materials to gain a solid foundation in Christian Doctrine, and even conduct the course themselves under the supervision of a priest who is the pastor of a far-flung flock; and others too numerous to mention.

Thus, in two and a half years of giving instruction by mail our experience has proved that in the field of practical catechetics, and especially in presenting the Faith to non-Catholics, a correspondence course in Christian Doctrine answers a very definite and rather widespread need.

Graduation and Class Awards

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